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NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL: "STYLES OF RADICAL WILL"

INTRO:

THE SIXTEENTH NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL IS NOW WELL UNDER WAY WITH FULL-LENGTH FEATURES FROM MANY COUNTRIES. AMONG THE AMERICAN OFFERINGS ARE ALSO THREE SHORT FILMS GROUPED TOGETHER UNDER THE TITLE "STYLES OF RADICAL WILL." ALICE RICHMAN REPORTS:

VOICE:

AT AN EARLIER TIME IN MOVIE MAKING THESE THREE FILMS WOULD HAVE BEEN LABELED "DOCUMENTARIES" - AND A LOT OF PEOPLE WOULD HAVE STAYED AWAY FROM THEM. BUT TELEVISION HAS ACCUSTOMED AMERICAN VIEWERS TO SHORT FILMS ON A WIDE RANGE OF SOCIAL SUBJECTS. AND WHAT WAS ONCE REJECTED AS "DOCUMENTARY" IS NOW WELCOMED AS "INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING".

EACH OF THESE FILMS INVESTIGATES VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICS. THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE IMPRESSIVE. IN "THEY ARE THEIR OWN GIFTS," POET MURIEL RUKEYSER TALKS ABOUT HER LIFE AS A POLITICALLY COMMITTED PERSON WHOSE DEEPEST FEELINGS ARE EXPRESSED THROUGH POETRY. RUKEYSER WAS THE DAUGHTER OF PARENTS WHO THOUGHT ONLY IN TERMS OF MATERIAL SUCCESS. SHE PREFERRED LARGER INVOLVEMENTS - DESCRIBING THEM AS THE "REFERENCES AND ASSOCIATIONS OF LIFE."

TO MURIEL RUKEYSER, TO BE POLITICAL IS TO "NOTICE" THE THINGS THAT GO ON AROUND HER. THIS FILM SEEMS TO BE VERY SIMPLY MADE. THE SIXTY-FIVE YEAR OLD WRITER RECITES HER POETRY AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF NEW YORK'S BUILDINGS AND RIVERS. A FEW OLD PHOTOGRAPHS AND BITS OF NEWS FILMS HAVE BEEN INSERTED HERE AND THERE. SOMETIMES RUKEYSER SPEAKS TO THE CAMERA FROM HER DESK. AND IT SOON BECOMES VERY CLEAR

THAT THERE IS NOTHING IN THE FILM OR IN HER POETRY THAT HAS NOT BEEN CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT AND BEAUTIFULLY REALIZED. IT IS A PICTURE THAT LIFTS THE SPIRIT.

THE SECOND MOVIE - "CIA: CASE OFFICER" - IS A PORTRAIT OF JOHN STOCKWELL, A CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY OFFICER WHO WORKED IN VIETNAM AND ANGOLA. STOCKWELL TELLS THE STORY HIMSELF - FROM HIS BOYHOOD IN AFRICA AS THE SON OF MISSIONARIES TO THE MAN WHO BECAME A MEMBER OF THE AGENCY "TEAM" -- A MAN WHO THEN HAS TO DECIDE WHETHER TO FOLLOW THE DICTATES OF HIS CONSCIENCE OR THE ORDERS OF HIS SUPERIORS WHO BELIEVE THEY ARE SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY. STOCKWELL DECIDES HIS DEEPEST LOYALTY IS TO HIMSELF AND HIS OWN VISION OF WHAT HIS COUNTRY SHOULD REQUIRE OF HIM.

THE THIRD FILM IS CALLED "WITH BABIES AND BANNERS: STORY OF THE WOMEN'S EMERGENCY BRIGADE". IT IS THE LONGEST AND IN MANY WAYS THE MOST AMBITIOUS OF THE THREE. A SMALL GROUP OF ELDERLY WOMEN MEET AGAIN AFTER FORTY YEARS TO RELIVE THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE HISTORIC SIT-DOWN STRIKE AGAINST GENERAL MOTORS (IN FLINT, MICHIGAN) DURING THE WINTER OF NINETEEN THIRTY-SEVEN. THE FILM MOVES FROM THE PRESENT TO THE PAST WITH SUCH ASTONISHING OLD NEWSREEL FOOTAGE THAT THE VIEWER FEELS TRANSPORTED BACKWARDS IN TIME INTO ANOTHER ERA. VIOLENCE, HEROISM, GREAT POVERTY AND EVEN GREATER DETERMINATION ALL COMBINED THAT WINTER TO ALTER FOREVER THE DIRECTION OF AMERICAN WORKING LIFE. THE WOMEN IN THIS FILM WORKED IN THE FACTORIES, WALKED ON THE PICKET LINES ALONG WITH THEIR MEN AND COOKED IN THE STRIKE KITCHENS. THE PICTURE ENDS ON AN IRONIC NOTE. FORTY YEARS AFTER THE FIRST CRY OF "SOLIDARITY FOREVER" RANG OUT, AFTER ALL THE TRIUMPHS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT THAT

THESE WOMEN HELPED ACHIEVE, THEY ARE SEEN AT A UNION MEETING ASKING FOR SUPPORT IN THE FIGHT TO WIN EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN WORKERS.

THIS IS AN EXCITING FILM POPULATED BY PEOPLE STILL ON THE BATTLE LINE RELIVING PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MOMENT IN THEIR LIVES. "STYLES OF RADICAL WILL" MAY TURN OUT TO BE THE BEST FILM AT THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL.

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